

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. November 8, 1965: "Dürer and His Time," an exhibition of master drawings by Germany's greatest artist, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), will open Sunday, November 14, at the National Gallery of Art.

The selection of 150 German drawings is from the Print and Drawing Room of the Berlin State Museums, a collection which was moved from East to West Berlin during and after World War II.

They represent "the absolute cream of the Berlin Museums' 22,000 drawing collection," according to Dr. Fedja Anzelewsky who accompanied the drawings to America and wrote the text for the catalogue.

For safety reasons, he said, the drawings were sent on three separate planes. Overland transportation was not used at all, he explained, because the shipment would have had to pass through the Soviet Zone of Germany.

The exhibition includes some of the most important drawings by artists whose greatest strength was their draftsmanship. A comprehensive selection of works by the major German artists from 1470 to 1530, it reveals the full range of techniques, subject matter, and stylistic variation shortly before and in the early

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years of the Reformation, when the Gothic and Renaissance existed side by side in Germany.

With 40 drawings Dürer dominates the exhibition as he dominated his own time. A drawing dated 1485 shows him a master at the age of 14. From a beautiful sketch in pen and ink of The Rest on the Flight into Egypt to a careful study of a Head of an Old Man, executed with black ink on dark mauve paper and highlighted with white, his hand gives precise realization to inventive imagination and perceptive vision. Two of the Dürer watercolors are among the earliest pure landscape drawings in existence.

Not only does the National Gallery exhibition show all periods of the German master's work but also the breadth of his interests and personality. There are, for example, two portraits of his close friend, the Nuremberg patrician and humanist, Willibald Pirckheimer. Dürer's painstaking studies of human proportions are represented by the Female Nude which was drawn first according to mathematical theory and then transferred by pin pricks to the other side of the sheet where the figure was executed fully.

Examples of other German draftsmen in the time of Dürer's youth include two sheets by Martin Schongauer---the greatest engraver before Dürer---and a number of works from the Franconian School, one attributed to Dürer's teacher, Michael Wolgemut.

Though Dürer's influence on German art can scarcely be overestimated, there are only a few artists who can be called his pupils. The exhibited drawings of Hans Baldung Grien, Hans Schäufelein and Hans Süss von Kulmbach reveal the close relationship to the master's work.

Four rare drawings by Mathis Gothart Nithart, called Grünewald, are on exhibit. Of the surviving 36, 14 are preserved in the Print Room Collection in West Berlin. The artist's preference for chalk,

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his emphasis on tonal values, and the subordination of detail are evidence of a painter's style as opposed to that of an engraver.

Albrecht Altdorfer and Wolf Huber are the principal exponents of the so-called Danube School, demonstrating in their landscape drawings an intense feeling for nature. Their drawings were often made as finished works of art for collectors who prized them as acts of the creative moment.

Two of Lucas Cranach the Elder's earliest drawings (ca. 1502), depicting the Crucified Thieves, are evidence of the artist's founding role in the Danube School before he became a court painter in Wittenberg. His subsequent fame as a portraitist is exhibited by a brush and oil drawing of a Beardless Man.

A visual record of a remarkably talented family of artists is found in the silverpoint drawing by Hans Holbein the Elder of his two sons, Ambrosius and Hans Holbein the Younger. Twelve such silverpoint drawings, some with added color, by the elder Holbein shorten the shadow cast on him by his more famous son. Among the three drawings by the younger Holbein is a design for a fresco which he painted on the façade of a house in Basel.

"Dürer and His Time" is sponsored by His Excellency Heinrich Knappstein, Ambassador of Germany. It is circulated in America by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. After closing in Washington December 12, it will go to the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (December 18-January 19), The Art Institute of Chicago (February 1-March 1), and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (March 15-April 15).

End

Black-and-white glossy photographs and catalogue on loan for purposes of publication are available from William W. Morrison, Assistant to the Director, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Area code 202, 737-4215, ext. 224.